DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 432 528 SO 031 018

AUTHOR	Frese, Millie K., Ed.
TITLE	Music in Iowa History.
INSTITUTION	Iowa State Historical Society, Iowa City.
ISSN	ISSN-0278-0208
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	37p.
AVAILABLE FROM	State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Classroom - Learner (051)
JOURNAL CIT	Goldfinch: Iowa History for Young People; v20 n4 Sum 1999
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Education; *Local History; *Music; *Musicians; *Popular Culture; *Social Studies; *State History
IDENTIFIERS	*Iowa; *Music History

ABSTRACT

This theme issue of "The Goldfinch" focuses on music as an art using sound in time to express ideas and emotions and contains articles featuring appreciations of some of Iowa's renowned musical artists. The first article gives an overview of music in Iowa's history. The next article describes Antonin Dvorak's summer sojourn in Spillville where he played for the town's residents and was inspired to compose several works. Other articles consider the jazz musician Bix Beiderbecke; the lives and works of several female composers and singers; Meredith Wilson, the composer of the Broadway hit, "The Music Man"; Simon Estes, an opera singer; Margherita Roberti, an opera singer; and Buddy Holly, of rock and roll fame. (BT)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

THE Goldfinch

Iowa History for Young People Volume 20, Number 4 • Summer 1999 • $3

ED 432 528

Music in Iowa HISTORY

SO 031 018

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. Gore

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

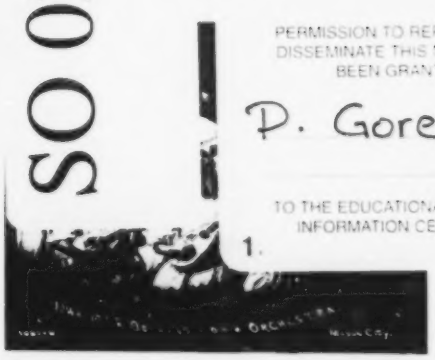
1.

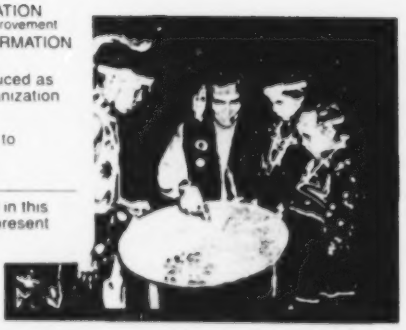
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.



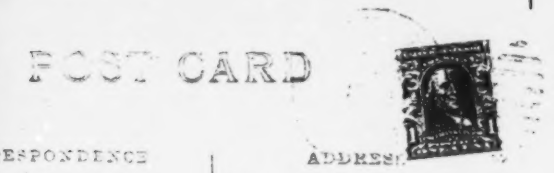


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In the 1890s, it became popular to have photographs printed on postcards to send to friends and relatives. Prior to 1890 it was illegal to send postcards bearing photographs through the mail!



Music scenes like this were popular on early picture postcards.

Postcard: Courtesy Fred Crane

Hello Garlie.
Add this to your collection it will keep the rats out of the cellar. With love
Harriette

To
Miss
Winnifred Hughes
501 West 2nd St
Ottumwa
Iowa.

Dear Readers,

Music is an art using sound in time to express ideas and emotions. Music takes you places. Can you think of a song that reminds you of a certain time or event? When you hear that song, does it seem as though you're there again? Music connects people and places, past and future, in a language that speaks across time and cultures. For some of the artists featured in this issue of *The Goldfinch*, music has literally taken them all over the world. But you don't have to make music your career—or even be particularly good at it—to make music part of your everyday life.

Listen, play, sing, and enjoy. Music is for everyone.

The Editor

Singing and dancing were part of this campout ca. 1900. Do you go camping? How does this scene compare with your campouts?

THE Goldfinch
Volume 20, Number 4 • Summer 1999

Educational Press Association of America Member

Winner of a 1998 Parents' Choice Silver Honor Award

EDITOR: Millie K. Frese
PUBLICATIONS DIRECTOR: Shaner Magalhães
ILLUSTRATION: Mary Moye-Rowley
PUBLICATIONS ASSISTANTS: Anna Vorm and Nicci Yang
FICTION EDITOR: Frank Tribble
COVER: Kris Atha

CONSULTING EDITORS: Frederick Crane, Professor Emeritus, University of Iowa; Loren Horton, historian; and Spencer Howard, Special Collections Assistant, SHSI (Iowa City).

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Jill Esbaum, Katherine House, and Diane Nelson.

EDUCATORS' ADVISORY BOARD: Carol Dighton, West Delaware Middle School, Manchester; Janice L. Gobble, Danville Elementary School, Danville; Valerie Kreutner, Black Hawk Elementary School, Burlington; and Clen A. Lincoln, Fair Oaks Middle School, Fort Dodge.

CHILDREN'S ADVISORY BOARD: Ben Butler, Cedar Rapids; Sarah Frese, Danville; Emily Johnson, Fort Dodge; Jessica Myers, Coralville; and Jeff Zittergruen, Van Horne.

CREDITS: All photographs are from SHSI (Iowa City) collections unless otherwise noted.

The Goldfinch (ISSN 0278-0208) is published quarterly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240-1806 (319/335-3916). Second-class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa. Subscriptions are $9.95 for four issues.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: Carol Carey, subscriptions coordinator, *The Goldfinch*, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240-1806. © State Historical Society of Iowa, 1999. No portion of *The Goldfinch* may be reproduced without prior permission except for classroom use.

The Goldfinch is also available on cassette tape for those with visual impairments, physical disabilities, and learning disabilities. For more information contact the Iowa Department for the Blind, 1-800-362-2587. Or write to the Iowa Department for the Blind Library, 524 4th St., Des Moines 50309.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In this issue:

PHOTO: COURTESY QUAD CITY TIMES/DAVENPORT

p. 14

PHOTO: COURTESY FREDERICK CRANE

p. 29

All That Jazz!

p. 9

4 The Sounds of Iowa Music
10 Dear Diary...
12 Antonín Dvořák
14 Bix Beiderbecke: Boy with a Horn
16 A Century of Women Composers
18 Iowa Songs
20 Give Them Good Songs
23 Trouble in River City?
24 Remembering Buddy Holly
26 Simon Estes: An Iowa Voice
28 Margherita Roberti
29 More Notable Iowans
30 Fiction: Singing in the Choir
34 Iowa Performers: The Next Generation
35 Name that Iowa Musician

The Sounds of Iowa Music

Music in Iowa is as old as the land itself. Nature composed and performed the first sounds of Iowa music: wind blowing gently (or howling violently) through tall grasses, rain splattering, thunder crashing, birds chirping, and streams tumbling along rocky shores. When people came to this region, they brought music traditions with them. And they created new songs, sometimes inspired by the beauty and sounds already here.

People first migrated to this area approximately 12,000 years ago. About 15 American Indian tribes inhabited the area over time.

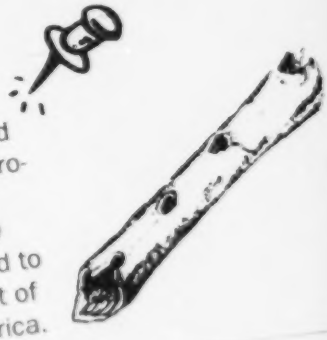
The Mesquakie Indians arrived in Iowa shortly before white settlers in the early 1800s. Music was (and is) an important part of Mesquakie life. Nature provided Mesquakie musicians with materials for traditional instruments in addition to inspiration for their songs. They made flutes out of red cedar and drums of animal skin stretched over sections of hollow logs. Handmade rattles and tambourines also added rhythm to songs and dances.

Today, Mesquakie drumming groups, dancers, and singers perform at dances and ceremonies throughout the country. Everett Kapayou, from the Mesquakie Settlement near Tama, is one of the people who sings to keep Mesquakie music traditions alive. Traditional love songs, or "mood music," are his specialty. Kapayou also sings war dance and round dance songs. Sometimes he translates the lyrics into English so young Mesquakies and other listeners will understand the words.

Young Mesquakies learn about traditional music from their elders.

European-American settlers moving west into the territory that became Iowa brought music with them, too. Musical games, dance tunes, and folk songs helped this new land seem more like home.

Fiddles were probably the most prominent instrument in early Iowa communities. A fiddle



A flute made from the hollow leg bone of a bird was discovered in Cherokee County in 1973. Estimated to be 6,000 years old, it is believed to be the earliest artifact of its kind in North America.

Did you know?

- Music was very valuable to the Indians. They would pay the equivalent of the value of one or two ponies for a song they believed could cure them or bring them good luck.
- Early Indian songs had a point. They weren't sung just for fun, but instead were used to treat the sick, win a war, or have a good hunt.
- Chippewa and Sioux Indians had "honor songs" that complimented those whose names were inserted in the ancient songs.
- Indian children played musical games much like "Ring-Around-the-Rosy." The Chippewa Indians had a "game of silence" where the children tried to stay quiet as an adult sang. The singer interrupted the song unexpectedly with a cry, hoping to startle the children so they'd yell or make a noise. Whoever remained quiet the longest was the winner.
- Birds and animals played important roles in many healing songs. A Sioux medicineman treating a broken arm, for example, sang, "Bear told me to do this" as he set the patient's arm.

was small and easy to transport. One fiddler could accompany many dancers, and the music could be heard above the commotion. Furniture was shoved to the side of the room for a dance in the winter, or carried outside in fair weather to make room for dancing. Iowans acquired large instruments such as pianos and organs as transportation improved.

By the 1860s, it was easier to deliver pianos to Iowa homes, but the instruments presented another problem for their owners. Pianos need tuning, and piano tuners were in short supply.

Photographs provide some of the best evidence of the importance of music in Iowa

Why do you think social gatherings such as hoe-downs and square dances were important in early Iowa communities?

Imagine a journey to Iowa Territory in the early 1800s. What would you bring with you? Remember—everything you need to start a new life must fit inside a small covered wagon or be shipped (for a price) in a railroad freight car to a steamboat that will carry you up the Mississippi River to Iowa. You will leave behind friends and relatives and the social events you shared. You may have to leave some of your favorite "stuff" behind, too, making room for the things your family needs to survive. That means transporting your piano is out of the question. What instruments could you take?

Or, maybe you're moving to Iowa Territory because hard times left your family unable to make a living. You don't have any musical instruments to bring along. How would you keep your musical traditions with you?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Piano in the Parlor

The photo titled "A Rendezvous at Blocks," was taken in Iowa City during a 1905 parlor party. Pianos in Iowa homes became more common in the 1860s, but the first piano is said to have arrived in Iowa in the 1830s. It was brought down the Ohio River on a barge, then transported overland to a ferry on the Mississippi River which delivered the instrument to a Mr. Evans in Montrose. Owning a piano or organ was evidence of wealth and high social standing.

homes. People gathered around a piano for photographs or held musical instruments for portraits. Music was part of parties, weddings, and campouts. If an occasion were important, there was music involved!

Before automobiles and good roads connected Iowa communities, people couldn't travel far for entertainment. Instead, early Iowans relied on local talent. Almost every town had its own band. What was probably the first band in Iowa led a parade in Dubuque in 1840. That "band" consisted of one clarinet and one cornet. Bands played for holiday celebra-

An unidentified girl had her picture taken in a West Liberty studio—with a guitar!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Music was—and is—part of everyday life. This photo, taken between 1910 and 1915, shows a group of people during an outing, probably in Johnson County. Look at the items they have with them. What do you think they plan to do? How will music be part of the event? How is music part of your everyday activities and special events?

Can you find the music?

tions on the Fourth of July, Washington's Birthday, New Year's Day, and Memorial Day, which became a holiday after the Civil War. They played for community and church picnics, ice cream socials, and concerts in the park. They played during excursions on trains and riverboats. Band instruments were popular and plentiful in Iowa by the 1860s. But even with instruments available, learning to play could be a challenge. Vocal and instrumental music classes weren't taught in school and private instructors could be hard to find.

1950s musician Jonah Jones with his trumpet

Read "Dear Diary..." on page 10 and "Give Them Good Songs..." on page 20 to see how Iowans studied music a century ago.

In this issue of *The Goldfinch*, you'll also discover that every kind of music is represented in stories from the history of music in Iowa. Every new kind of popular music was soon performed in Iowa. Municipal bands played ragtime when it was new at the beginning of this century. Iowans—like the rest of the country—went crazy over jazz when it was introduced around 1917. We'll profile famous musicians with

These postcards depict two types of bands found in Iowa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The children's band represents the I.O.O.F. Orphanage, and the cornet band played for Danville.

Radio stations often featured live musicians and entertainment. Marketing and recording technology changed that in the mid-20th century. Encouraged by marketing efforts, people began to favor nationally known performers. Better sound recordings made it possible for local stations to play music of the stars.

This photo of the Jeffers' Ladies Kilty Band was taken in Panora during the summer of 1921. The Kilty Band performed during the chautauqua (shuh-TAW-qwuh), a summer program of education and entertainment. Chautauqua performers traveled from town to town across America. The events were especially popular in Iowa and the midwest.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Iowa connections who represent a variety of music traditions. Maybe you'll recognize some of the artists featured throughout the magazine. Others may be new to you. But remember—the real story of music in Iowa is the place music occupied in the everyday lives of ordinary people.

A jazz band performing on a Mississippi River excursion boat.

All That Jazz!

Jazz music is hard to describe because of its many different sounds and sources.

"The definition of jazz is as slippery as a bar of soap," according to John Rapson, director of jazz studies at the University of Iowa. Jazz contains elements of many types of music such as rhythms from West Africa and harmonies from American folk music. It's a mix created through the diversity of people in the U.S. "It only could have happened here in America with the clash of cultures and the disenfranchised groups of people," Rapson said.

Jazz gets your toes tapping, probably because most jazz has a swing rhythm, Rapson explained. Most jazz musicians, like Iowan Bix Beiderbecke, "improvise" or make up music as they go along. (Read more about Bix on page 14.)

"There is a high priority of improvisation and individual contribution in jazz," said Rapson. "Certainly there is jazz without improvisation, but there is not very much."

Many people think jazz originated in New Orleans. "The myth of jazz is that it came up the river," Rapson said. Jazz actually began in many different cities with many different musicians. New Orleans was just one of the hot spots. Jazz musicians also played in New York, Chicago, and cities all along the Mississippi River. "Iowa's significant role in jazz was our location," Rapson said. "Iowa was right in-between Chicago and Kansas City." As musicians traveled between the two cities, they stopped in Iowa to perform.

Another reason talented jazz musicians played in Iowa is that many performers took jobs on excursion boats when they were just starting out and needed money.

Fate Marable, a pianist and riverboat jazz bandleader, began playing on excursion boats about 1907. He persuaded many jazz players to travel with him to places like Burlington and Davenport, Iowa.

According to Rapson, the popularity of jazz is fading in Iowa much as it did in the 1960s. "On the other hand, jazz is growing in the schools," he said. "Right now there are 35,000 jazz bands in high schools and colleges across the nation."

Iowa also showcases several summertime jazz festivals such as "Jazz in July" in Des Moines and the "Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Festival" in Davenport.

Dear Diary...

Erwin Soloman Buffum, born in 1847, grew up on the Iowa prairie near Garden Grove. In his high school diaries, he wrote about doing chores on his family's farm, taking classes in town, and getting together with his friends.

On their farm, the Buffums grew wheat, oats, and sugar cane, and raised lambs. Erwin kept busy on the farm, but he was never too busy for music. Erwin often wrote about the music in his life—from singing in shows to playing instruments.

Making music was a way to have fun with friends in the 1800s. At that time, they did not have movie theaters, video games, and computers to play with as kids have today. Read about some of the kinds of music Erwin enjoyed and wrote about in his diary.

1866

Mar. 6, Tuesday

Went down to Prof. Harknesses house this evening to practice music which we are to sing at the exhibition Friday evening. Escourted Miss Emma C. home. Had a fine time.

Mar. 28, Wednesday

Did all the chores as usual today. Chopped wood. Father went after another load of lumber. Learned some new pieces on the flute. Retired at 8.

Mar. 30, Friday

. . . Ira and Mary made us quite a visit this evening. Ira fetched up the fiddle and we had quite a gay time. . .

September 13, Thursday

. . . Went up to Mr. Shepard's this evening with Miss Helen Worth to hear her play the piano. Think she is a very good player. Engaged her company for the party at Culver's the 19th of this month.

November 14, Wednesday

. . . Went down to see Mr. Custers this evening about taking lessons on the flute.

December 1, Saturday

. . . After noon I took my flute over to R. H. for him to take to Leroy as he is going to Chicago on his journey to Ohio. . .

1867

January 29, Tuesday

. . . Went down town after school to see if my flute came in the express but did not get it.

Neither did I get a letter from Leroy as I expected to do. I am doubtful about my ever seeing it again. . .

February 12, Tuesday

. . . Rec'd a letter from Leroy this noon with very good news about my flute. He had got and took it to the music store to get it fixed and thought he would express it on Friday or Monday last. Think I shall get it in the course of a week or ten days. . .

March 9, Saturday

. . . I went up to Mr. Chemberlin's and packed my trunk for home. Then I took the guitar and went up and learned two pieces from Romolus Watts.

June 13, Thursday

. . . Watts stayed here all night and after reading awhile. I got Leroy's old violin and by hunting up all the old strings in the house, got it rigged and we had some music, he playing the violin and I accompanying him on the guitar. . .

Erwin ended up sending his flute to Chicago to get it fixed. Back in the 1800s, musicians who played instruments had a difficult time. Erwin had to try hard to find someone to teach him how to play the instruments in his small town. He also had a hard time getting his instrument fixed because there were no music shops in nearby Garden Grove. Study Erwin's diary entries again, and then answer the questions below.

❶ What kinds of instruments does Erwin play?

_____

_____

❷ On March 6, 1866, Erwin mentions singing in an "exhibition." What is an exhibition? Have you ever been in one? What did you do? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

❸ The diary never mentioned the whereabouts of Erwin's flute again after the entry on Feb. 12, 1867. Do you think he ever got his flute back from Chicago? Why or why not?

_____

_____

❹ Making their own music was an important form of entertainment for kids in the 1800s. Is music as important to kids today as it was to Erwin? Do you play an instrument or sing? Or do you prefer listening to recorded music? _____

_____

_____

Antonín Dvořák

A famous Bohemian composer finds inspiration and a place like home in an Iowa town.

Antonín Dvořák

"Just what kind of town is Spillville?"

That's what Antonín Dvořák wanted to know as the summer of 1893 approached. He'd lived in New York City for more than a year as acting director of the National Conservatory and had completed work on his *New World Symphony*. Annoyed with city noise and bustle, the composer—who had come to New York from **Bohemia**—was homesick. Really homesick. Dvořák's summer vacation wouldn't allow enough time to travel to his native country. But there was time for a trip to a place like home: Spillville, Iowa.

Dvořák learned of Spillville from his secretary Joseph J. Kovarik, who grew up in this northeast Iowa town of 350 people who shared Dvořák's Bohemian language, heritage, and traditions. Before the trip from New York to Iowa, Dvořák memorized Kovarik's hand-drawn maps of Spillville. He learned people's names, where they lived, and their occupations.

Dvořák's wife and six children accompanied him to Spillville for the summer. While he was no ordinary visitor, the people of Spillville didn't treat him like a celebrity. Everyone in Spillville knew he was a famous musician and composer, but Dvořák still had to earn their respect. The residents of Spillville loved music. People sang hymns in church and folk songs in the fields. From their homes Dvořák could hear notes of zither, harmonica, violin, and cello. But some were skeptical of Dvořák because he was a rich person who made his fortune in Prague and New York City by composing music, while they earned their livings through physical labor. In the 1890s in America—and especially in Iowa—it was still unusual for a career in music to generate great wealth and fame.

Dvořák wrote the **New World Symphony** to describe America in music. He wanted to capture the beauty and diversity of the land, along with the dreams, work, and folk songs of the people. He astonished music critics in the 1890s when he predicted that the American music of the future would reflect a variety of folk music, including African-American spirituals and American Indian themes. Listen to music of 20th century American composers such as Aaron Copland, William Schuman, Charles Ives, and Leonard Bernstein—ask your music teacher if you need help finding songs by these composers. Do you think Dvořák's prediction was correct? Why?

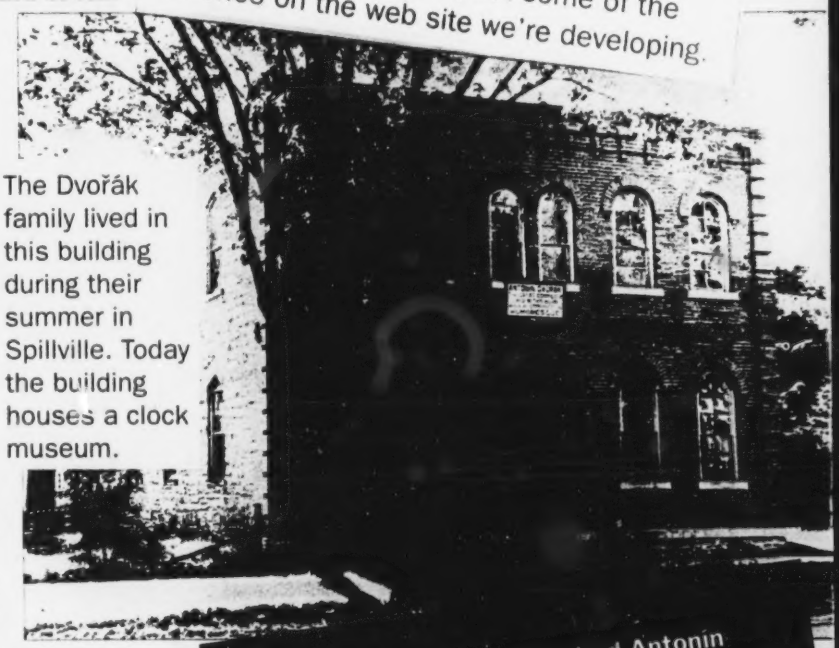
Bohemia was a province of western Czechoslovakia, now known as the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

On his first morning in Spillville, Dvořák walked through the woods before dawn, watched the sunrise, listened to the birds, then wandered into St. Wenceslaus Church at 7 a.m. and sat down at the organ in the choir loft. Soon the massive church walls echoed with traditional Bohemian hymns. Those gathered for early morning prayers were astonished by the performance and Dvořák secured a place as organist for the summer. He played every morning for Mass, and for weddings and funerals. Before long, he was everyone's friend. He listened for hours to the pioneer stories Spillville's first settlers from Bohemia told about clearing land and breaking sod. He questioned farmers about their crops, cattle, and the weather. He talked to the shoemaker, blacksmith, and butcher about their trades. With his common clothes and manners, Spillville's residents forgot about Dvořák's wealth and fame.

Daily walks along the Turkey River inspired Dvořák. Songbirds, rippling water, insects, and the breath of wind in the trees—even the clatter of wooden wheels on country roads—formed melodies in Dvořák's mind. He translated the sounds of nature into notes of music and wrote them in pencil on his shirt cuffs so he could remember the sounds and incorporate nature's harmonies into his compositions. (The woman he hired to do his laundry, it is said, complained about the pencil scratchings on his white shirt cuffs.)

Local musicians tried out Dvořák's Spillville compositions as the composer revised and perfected them. Members of Kovarik's family performed the world premiere of Dvořák's *Quartette in F Major* in Spillville to an audience of neighbors who could hear the music through open windows. Later the work was performed by professional musicians in New York. "I like it better the way we played it in Spillville," Dvořák stated.

What would it be like if a famous musician moved to your town for the summer? Would he or she be treated like any other person in town as Dvořák was in Spillville? Or would the musician be treated like a celebrity? Imagine your favorite musician moving in next door for the summer, write a story about it, and send your story to *The Goldfinch*! We'll send you a prize and post some of the stories on the web site we're developing.



The Dvořák family lived in this building during their summer in Spillville. Today the building houses a clock museum.

The sounds of Iowa inspired Antonín Dvořák—rain, rivers, songbirds, insects, and wind. Think of instruments you could make to imitate these sounds. For example, seal grains of rice inside a cardboard paper towel tube. Tipping it slowly back and forth sounds a little like water in a stream. Be creative! Send pictures and descriptions of your instruments to *The Goldfinch*.

PHOTOS: COURTESY FREDERICK CRANE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Bix Beiderbecke

Boy With a Horn

by Jill Esbaum

One of the greatest names in early jazz music was Iowa's own Bix Beiderbecke.

Leon Bismarck Beiderbecke (pronounced BYE-der-beck) was born in Davenport in March 1903 to a wealthy German immigrant family. His father was in the lumber business and his mother played the piano and pipe organ. Bix, too, loved music from an early age, picking out tunes on the family's piano as soon as he could reach the keys. At his mother's urging, the boy took piano lessons for a short time, but played by ear. Bix never learned to read music.

Riverboats came up the Mississippi River from New Orleans, docking in Davenport. Bix would sit on the shore for hours, ears straining to hear the fascinating music of the jazz bands playing on board. He soaked up every note as he dreamed of becoming a great jazz musician.

With intense ambition unlike most boys his age, Bix taught himself to play a beat-up, second-hand cornet. As a young teen, he looked forward to his family's frequent evenings out. As soon as they left, he would come downstairs in his pajamas, sit by the Victrola [record player], and play his cornet along with the music. He became so absorbed in music that people thought him a bit strange. He was never without his instrument, wrapped in newspaper. It was constantly tucked under one arm and accompanied him wherever he went.

Bix spent two and a half years in high school in Davenport before entering Lake Forest Academy in Chicago in 1921. At a school dance, he played the piano in the dance band. It was his cornet playing, however, that soon earned him a special place in the band. Unlike his talent in music, his grades were nothing to brag about. He left the school without graduating, but was happy to be playing his beloved jazz and living the life of a musician.

In 1923, Bix Beiderbecke was one of the founding members of a jazz band called the Wolverines. From then on, he played with a

variety of bands working in clubs, making records, and "jamming" with other famous musicians of the day.

Bix improvised his music, making up what he played as he went along. Because of this ability, he seldom played a song the exact same way twice. This was very frustrating for the people who tried to write down the notes that Bix played.

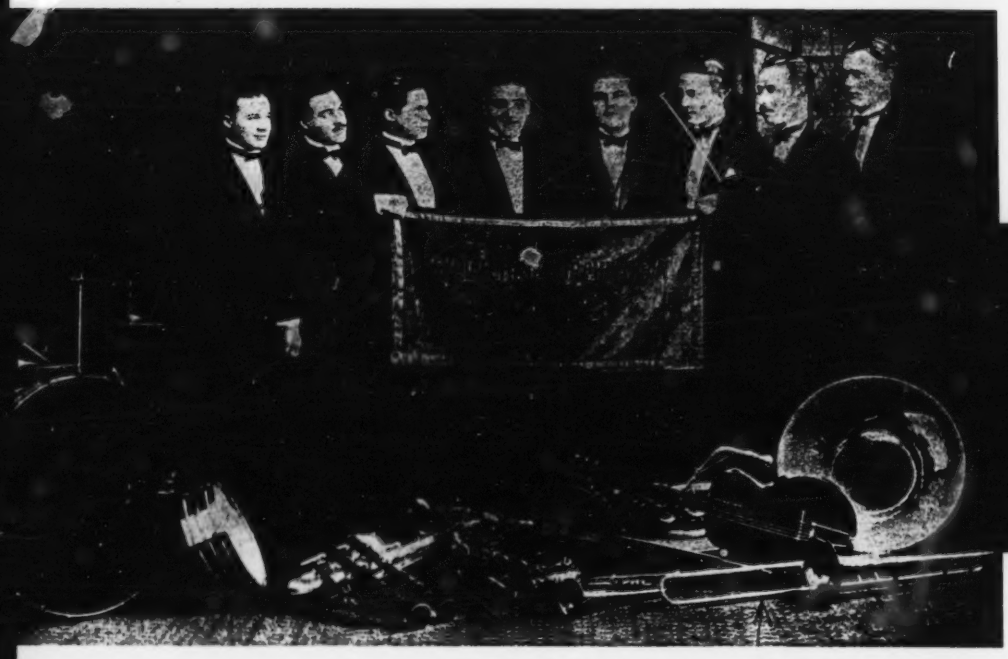
By 1929, he was playing in the Paul Whiteman band, and the arrangements were becoming more and more complicated. Signed to play on a weekly radio show, the band was expected to play up to twenty songs in sixty minutes. Sometimes five or six of the songs were brand new. Being unable to read music, Bix had trouble keeping up with the other members of the band and began to lose his confidence. He had always wanted his playing to be perfect. Disappointed in himself, he turned to alcohol.

Too much drinking affected his health. Soon the band couldn't depend on him. He also began having lung problems, but ignored them. In Spring of 1931, the band leader sent him home to Davenport for a rest. After a short time at home, however, he moved to New York, where he lived in the apartment of a friend and fellow musician, George Kraslow. Here something happened that shows how much people liked the mild-mannered, good-natured Bix—and his music.

During those hot summer nights, Bix would awaken at three or four in the morning, sit on his open windowsill and play his cornet. Amazingly, the neighbors didn't complain and even told his friend: "Please don't mention we said anything. . . we would hate for him to stop."

But stop he did. Beiderbecke's already-weakened body was unable to fight off a bout with pneumonia, and he died on August 7, 1931. He was only 28 years old.

Although he died young, Beiderbecke's dream was fulfilled. History records him as one of the most influential pioneers of jazz music. Each July, Davenport hosts The Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Festival, honoring Beiderbecke's contribution to jazz music and the memory of his remarkable talent.



Bix Beiderbecke (third from right) played with bands including the Wolverine Orchestra of Chicago.

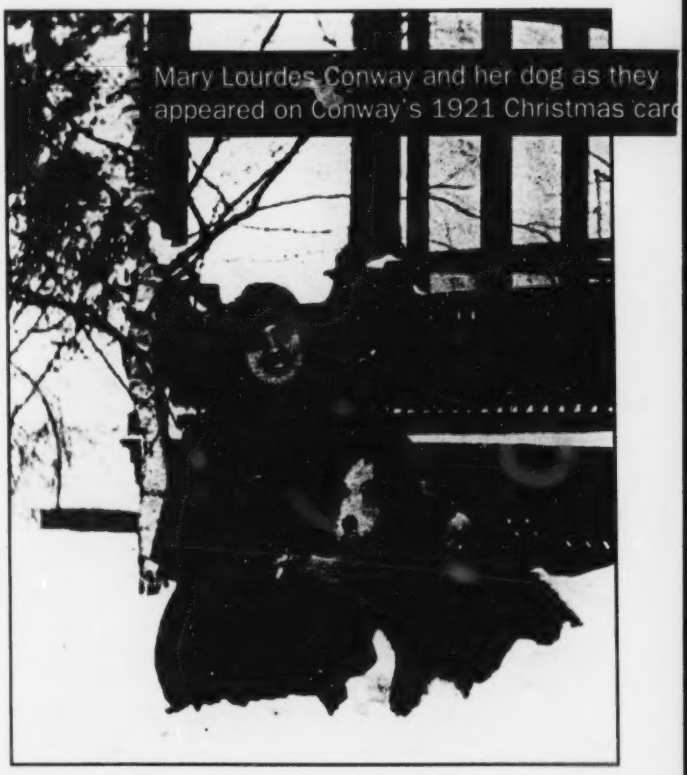
A Century of Women Composers

by Diane Nelson

In 1938, the Iowa Federation of Music Clubs listed 63 "Native-born Composers" in their history of the first century of Iowa's music. Thirty-six of the songwriters listed were women, including:

Fannie Rebecca Buchanan, Victor

Some have called hers a "kaleidoscope life — full of color, always interesting, but continually changing." After graduating in music from Grinnell College, Buchanan organized music and recreation activities with War Camp Community Service in World War I, helped revise Compton's *Picture Encyclopedia*, worked in rehabilitation for the American Red Cross, and joined the education department of the Victor Talking Machine Company. As Rural Specialist, she traveled the country, returning to Iowa to lecture on music appreciation topics. She played a vital role in expanding the 4-H music program and created five songs in partnership with her Grinnell College friend, Rena Parrish. In "Dreaming" she tried to translate into words the daydreams of the many 4-H girls she met across the country. "The Plowing Song" was dedicated to farm boys, those "sons of the soil" and "lads of the field and flock." Both were introduced nationally in 1927; and followed by "A Song of Health" in 1929; "4-H Friendship" in 1932; and "4-H Field Song" in 1933. In 1930, she joined the Iowa State College extension staff. Her 1937 "Little Studies in American Music" was studied by 12,930 women living on Iowa farms and 15,000 4-H girls.



Mary Lourdes Conway and her dog as they appeared on Conway's 1921 Christmas card

Mary Lourdes Conway, Fort Dodge

At the age of twelve, her first composition, "A Soldier's Memories of Home" was published by a Chicago firm, giving her the distinction of being the youngest Iowa composer to have work published. She graduated from the American Academy of Music in Fort Dodge and Clark College Conservatory with special work in piano, organ, harp, and compostition.

Hazel Gertrude Kinscella, Nora Springs
By 1938, Kinscella was a piano instructor at the University School of Music, Lincoln, Nebraska. She published a series of music appreciation readers and several sheet music pieces for children, as well as articles about music in national magazines.

Ilza Niemack, Charles City
Born in 1903, she began studying violin at age 3 with her father. She debuted in New York at age 19, performed in concerts in Europe and the U.S., headed the violin department at Iowa State College in Ames, and published several works for violin, including "Barcarolle," "Scherzo," and "Waterlilies."

Neva McFarland Wadhams, Sioux City
Born in 1889, Wadhams was a nationally recognized poet who wrote more than 50 songs, plays, and pageants, including a musical fantasy, "At the Foot of the Rainbow" that was performed by 1,800 Girl Scouts in 1936; and "The Blessing of Good Will," which won recognition from Lou Henry Hoover.

Floy Little Bartlett, Burlington
Born in the late 1800s, Bartlett first studied piano then started learning the violin at age 13. She studied in Illinois, New York, and Paris. She wrote "Historical Song Miniatures," described as "an attractive little book of stories containing songs about the great composers with melodies based on themes from their music" plus several songs and musical readings for children.

Alice Jordan, 82,

started composing songs when she was 11. Today she has written more than 35 "commissioned songs," or songs where groups paid her to write compostitions for special events. "It was always a natural expression for me," Jordan told *The Goldfinch*.

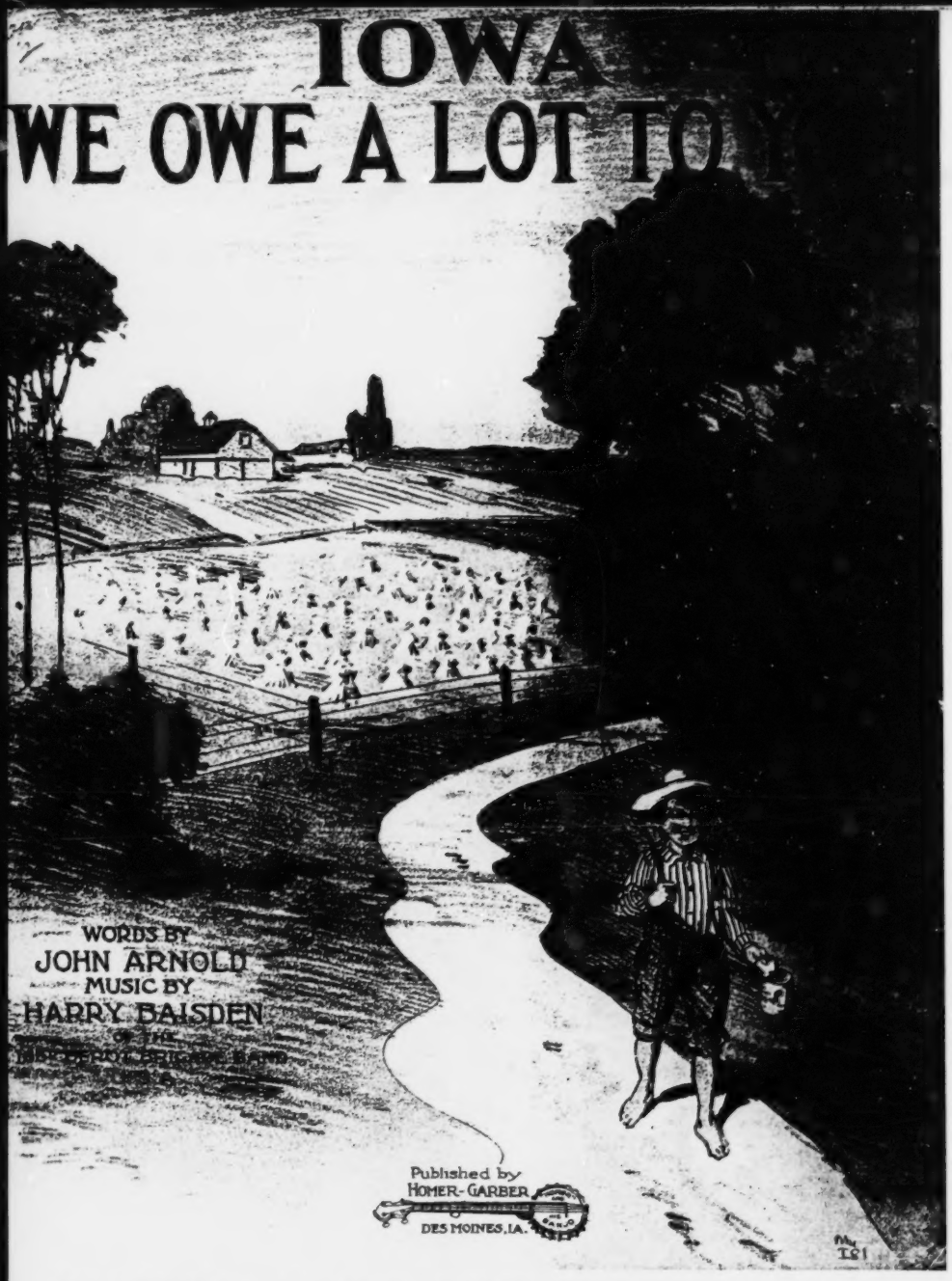
Jordan was born in Davenport on December 31, 1916. She's lived in Des Moines her entire life. Her parents weren't professional musicians, but they were very musical, Jordan recalls. She spent her childhood listening to records, playing the family's piano, and attending concerts and church. "I can't remember when we didn't have music in the home," she said.

Jordan composed her version of "America the Beautiful" in 1983 for the All-State Choir and Orchestra. It has been sung many times since, including at the inaugural balls for Iowa governors Terry Branstad and Tom Vilsack.

Jordan starts composing by picking out the words for the song, or the "text." Some people who ask her to write a song tell her what text they want, but sometimes Jordan gets to pick out her own. "Always start with the text because all the musical decisions come from the text," she said. "If the words express joy, you use a major key. The music comes from listening or hearing the words of the text."

The enjoyment of composing will stay with Jordan for the rest of her life. "Composing is still a great part of my life," she said. "There is something very exciting about having a blank piece of paper with five black lines on it and turning it into something that becomes music."

—by Anna Vorm



Sheet music tells us what kinds of music people wrote and played. Songs about Iowa written by Iowans let us know what composers thought about their state.

19

Iowa

Paul E. Stevens painted a magical picture of Iowa when he wrote the waltz "Iowa Stream" in 1922. For him, Iowa was like a stream with "the motion slow, the heaven's glow" full of "love's moonlit spell." The chorus goes like this:

Iowa Stream, its waves are silvery bright
It's like a dream, Fairyland dream,
When the moonlight's dancing on it at night.

Fannie R. Buchanan, another Iowa songwriter, saw Iowa as more than a flat, plain land. In a song she wrote in 1928, Buchanan personified Iowa as a "smiling prairie" full of natural strength, where miles of corn wave and the fields of wheat roll. She saw the state as a wild, free place, "a land that is free as unkempt winds, and glad as her wild bird's song." For Buchanan, Iowa represented all the adventurous ideas associated with the phrase, "Go West." These ideas were of dreams and future accomplishments in a land where people can roam,

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

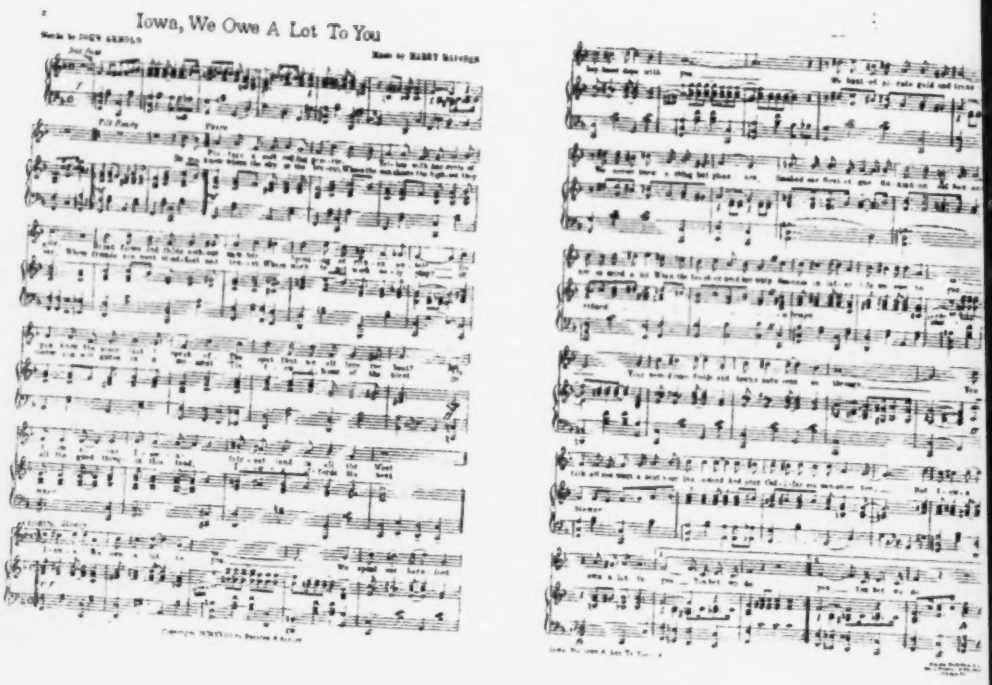
Songs

dream, and hope for bigger and better things.

A third songwriter, John Arnold, wrote about the innocent and carefree spirit of youth in Iowa. He wrote "Iowa, We Owe A Lot to You" in 1918. It's a song about the merry days of childhood. He recalls "barefoot, boyhood days" hunting for pirate gold and treasure. His perception of Iowa was full of blue skies, bright sunshine, and "yellow harvests of gold." To him, Iowa was a place where friends were "steadfast and true," where work was not work (it was play!), and worries never clouded the mind. Arnold loved Iowa best, and it remained a part of his childhood that he never forgot.

These songwriters—and many others—used words and music to describe what Iowa meant to them. Whether songwriters remained in Iowa or roamed to far-off places, they were captivated by Iowa's charm. Their pride was deeply rooted in nature and in cherished childhood memories.

by Nicci Yang



Now it's your turn. Write a song about your experiences living in Iowa. What images will you capture in words and music? Has anything happened at school that you could write a song about? Does nature inspire you the way it inspired these and other Iowa composers? Do you live in a rural area where you hear bird songs and insect noises? Can you hear trains clattering by? Do you live in a city where the sounds of traffic and industry fill the air? What sounds do you hear at night?

Write your own Iowa song and send it to *The Goldfinch*!

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

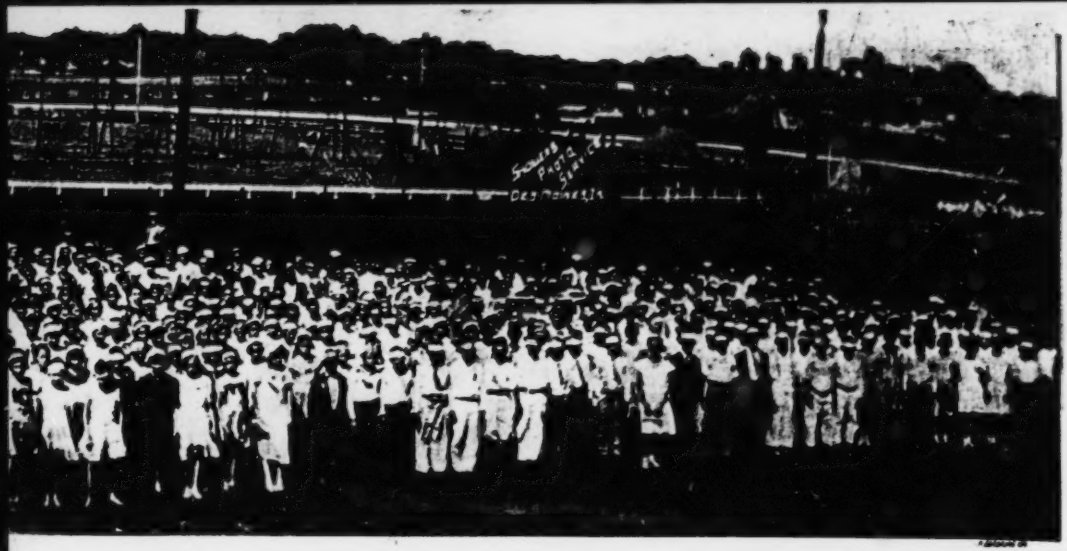
Give Them Good Songs...

by Diane Nelson

Music hasn't always been part of a school day. Many Iowa students learned music only if the teacher wanted to teach it. Or, if someone like Sarah Secrest Sherman begged to do so. Sarah's parents were "Singing School" conductors who brought their three small daughters to Iowa from Kentucky before the Civil War. As an adult, Sarah organized chorus groups and music productions in Monticello. After learning about Boston's successful program for teaching music in school, she brought home the textbooks and folded music charts and asked to be allowed to use them, without pay, in Iowa classrooms. Finally in 1888 she was given permission.

Students in larger 'town' schools were more likely to be taught music earlier and more systematically than students in rural schools. This bothered Charles Fullerton who had also grown up in a musical family. He once said, "We believe that every child has the right to inherit some of the fine music of the ages. Give him good songs in his youth and they will be a joy to him through life." After teaching in Norway, Parkersburg, and Manson, he studied for a year in Chicago and then returned to Cedar Falls in 1897 to join the faculty of the Iowa State Teachers College. His enthusiasm for music was contagious, and he enjoyed speaking with teachers and others about the importance of music.

After a disappointing visit to a one-room school in Black Hawk County, however, Fullerton was challenged to find a better way to teach music in rural areas. First, he compiled a book of fun-to-sing songs, including folk music from many



This photo shows the Iowa Rural School Chorus at the State Fair on August 26, 1934. Professor Fullerton (center front) led the singers, who represented more than 70 Iowa counties.

counties, sea chanteys, spirituals, works from the world's greatest composers, and regional American tunes. Next, he arranged for famous musicians to record one or two verses of several songs. These records weren't very expensive and could be used by any teacher anywhere. Two counties tried them in 1925, and by 1938, nearly every rural school in the state had a phonograph and at least some of the records. Fullerton's "Iowa plan of music teaching" also was used in several other states.

Children learned the tunes by listening and imitating. Every child above third grade who could sing ten selected songs correctly became a member of the school choir. As further reward, the school choirs joined to form county choruses that sang at graduation exercises and other events. In 1930, Professor Fullerton led a choir of five thousand children, representing 74 counties, at the state fair and "thrilled the crowds" according to a newspaper report.

Many adults felt that it was also important for youth to learn about famous composers and be able to recognize their music. For example, in 1922, Edith Barker arranged for the girls in her Scott County 4-H clubs to study 50 classical selections and then participate in a music memory contest. On the appointed day, the girls listened to instrumentalists perform the pieces. After each one, they were to write down the names of the composer and the composition. The club with the highest average score won a portable talking machine that they could use for one year. Second prize was a choice of six records from the memory list provided by the Victor Talking Machine Company. Two years later contests were held in Scott, Muscatine, Linn, Polk, Webster, Kossuth, and Pottawattamie Counties. Fifty counties held contests in 1926, with the first state contest held on December 30.

By 1928 the 4-H music program had expanded to include participation, as well as appreciation, with the first appearance of the State-Wide 4-H Girls Chorus and the State-Wide Harmonica Band. By 1938, 4-H Boys Choruses had been added in Iowa and O'Brien counties.

Trouble in River City?

by Katherine House

Meredith Willson turned his boyhood home in Iowa into music history.

Have your parents or grandparents ever used the expression *Trouble in River City*? Did you ever wonder what they mean, or where River City is?

Iowans can thank musician Meredith Willson for the famous phrase. Willson, a native of Mason City, wrote the popular 1957 Broadway musical *The Music Man*. Although the play was an instant hit, it was a struggle for Willson to write. He began working on it in 1948 and rewrote it 38 times! It won many awards and was one of the longest running Broadway shows. Willson won an Oscar for the music in the film version of the play.

The Music Man is set in the fictional town of River City, Iowa, in 1912. It tells the story of a traveling salesman named Harold Hill. He tries to persuade citizens to buy band uniforms and instruments to start a local boys' band. Hill tells them that there's "trouble right here in River City" because there aren't enough wholesome activities for the town's children.

Hill is a fast-talking salesman who convinces almost everyone that he will lead the band. However, the unsuspecting citizens don't know that Hill can't read a note of music. While visiting River City, he falls in love with the librarian named Marian, who also teaches piano lessons.

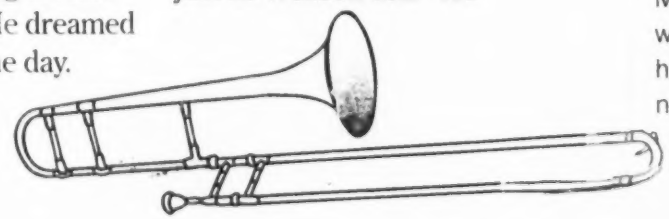
Although River City was a place Willson made up, the play is based on his boyhood in Mason City. Willson was born in 1902 and was the youngest of three children. Several scenes in *The Music Man* take place in the public library and candy kitchen, both favorite places for young Willson.

In real life, his mother—not "Marian the Librarian"—was the piano teacher. There were two pianos in the Willson home. Willson's mother used the piano downstairs for teaching lessons. Her children practiced on the piano upstairs. Willson also learned to play other instruments, including the flute and piccolo. He did not enjoy the piano, but loved to hang around the town bandstand. He dreamed of playing in a band one day.

Willson got his wish when he played the flute in a band led by John Philip Sousa. He also played with the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. In 1929, Willson began to compose music and went on to write more than 300 songs.

Among his hits were "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas" and "76 Trombones." He also wrote "May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You." The title of the song was taken from the good-bye message his mother gave her Sunday school class. If you've ever heard the fight songs played at an Iowa State or University of Iowa sporting event, you've heard Meredith Willson songs. He also wrote the musical *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*.

Today, visitors to Mason City can take a tour of Willson's boyhood home. When school groups tour the home, students can work with a piano player to compose their own songs about their favorite people and things, just as Willson did. "He [Willson] was an entrepreneur capable of taking what he learned from his roots in Iowa and became world-renowned as a composer, writer and musician," says Carl Miller, executive director of The Mason City Foundation. "That's a legacy that should live forever."



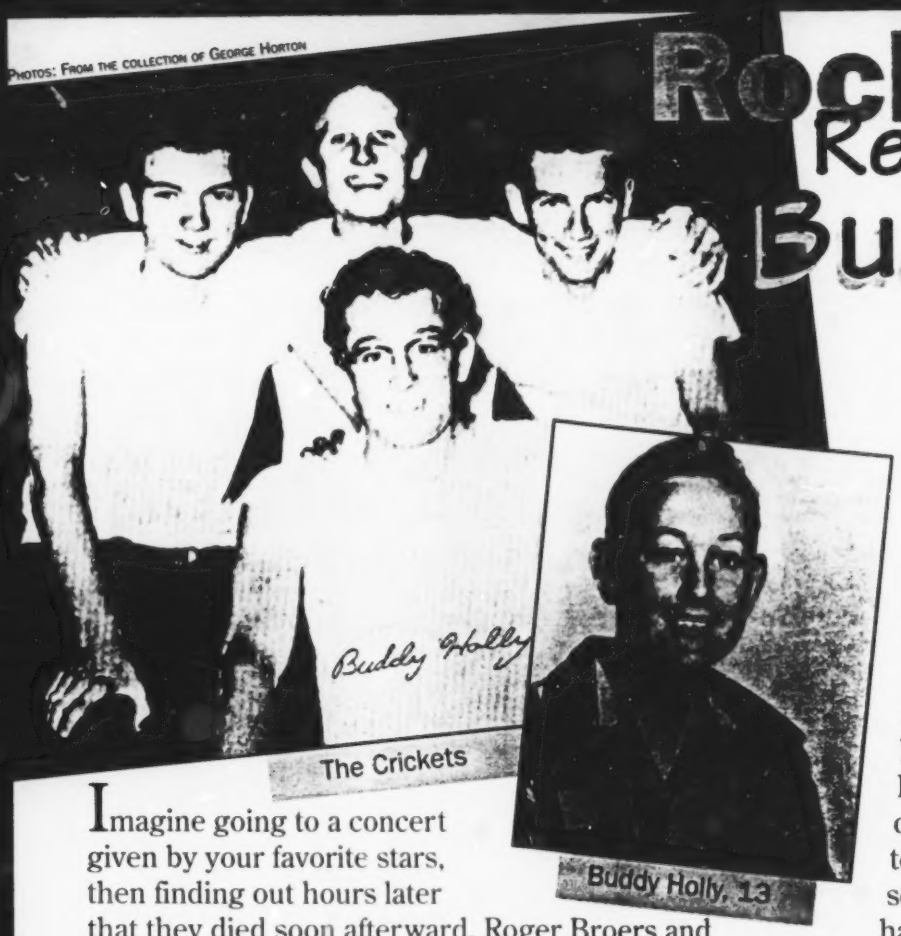
Preserving a Legacy

This year, Meredith Willson's face will become known to millions in the United States. That's because he'll appear on a postage stamp that is part of a six-stamp set featuring Broadway songwriters. The U.S. Postal Service calls the stamp series "Legends of American Music."

The citizens of Willson's hometown also are working to make sure no one will forget him. In 1998, construction began on The Music Man Square. It will include a children's museum, the Meredith Willson Museum, a theater, a music conservatory, and a place for special events. The project is the work of The Mason City Foundation, which works toward cultural and historic preservation of the north-central Iowa town.

Rock 'n' Roll
Remembering Buddy Holly

by Katherine House



PHOTOS: FROM THE COLLECTION OF GEORGE HORTON

The Crickets

Buddy Holly, 13

Imagine going to a concert given by your favorite stars, then finding out hours later that they died soon afterward. Roger Broers and more than 1,000 music fans did not have to imagine such a horrible thing. It really happened to them Feb. 2, 1959, in Clear Lake, Iowa.

Today Broers is a supervisor for Cerro Gordo County. But in the winter of 1959, he was a college sophomore and a fan of a relatively new type of music called rock 'n' roll. On Monday, Feb. 2, Broers and some friends went to see several performers at the Surf Ballroom. These included Buddy Holly, J.P. "the Big Bopper" Richardson, and Ritchie Valens.

The performers were traveling through the Midwest on a tour called "The Winter Dance Party." After the concert, Holly, Valens, and Richardson hopped aboard a small plane at the Mason City Airport. It was bound for Moorhead, Minn., site of their next concert. At about 1 a.m. on Feb. 3, the plane crashed in a cornfield northwest of the airport. The singers and pilot were killed.

Meanwhile, Broers and his friends stayed out all night. One of the men knew the DJ at the local radio station KRIB. While visiting the DJ, they found out about the crash. Curious, they drove to the crash site. Broers describes the scene as "sobering," especially since he had just exchanged greetings with Holly after the concert. "I saw him, and he was happy and upbeat," he says.

The crash affected young people deeply, partly because the singers weren't much older than most of their fans. Valens was only 17. Holly was 22, and Richardson was 28. "They were up and coming stars," says Scott Anderson, current owner of the Surf Ballroom. "A lot of people wonder where they'd be [today]. Had they reached their peak?...Who knows."

Forty years later, hearing the music of the deceased stars remains magical for Broers. When listening to it, you "remember where you were, what you were doing and what your life was like"

when it was popular, he explains. The late '50s and early '60s were happy times, he says. The era was wedged between the Korean War and the Vietnam conflict, sad periods for many Americans. "There's just a real feel-good atmosphere when that music's being played," he says.

The atmosphere is part of what draws rock 'n' roll fans back to the Surf every February for the Winter Dance Party tribute. The three-day event attracts approximately 2,500 people. Fans wear '50s-style clothing, including leather jackets, poodle skirts, and saddle shoes. They compete in dance and costume contests and watch musicians from the 1950s and '60s perform. Buses take fans to the crash site, where a simple memorial stands. Some people cry, while others sing.

The reunions began in 1979 when a disc jockey wanted to celebrate the lives of the musicians. There was renewed interest in their music, thanks in part to a 1971 song, "American Pie." The song's lyrics talk about "the day the music died."

George Horton of Vining has helped keep the memories of the singers alive. He was a Buddy Holly fan when he attended high school in Columbus Junction in the 1950s. He waited for the bus in a local store that had a jukebox. "We spent our lunch money in the morning playing the tunes," he recalls. On February 3, 1959, his school called an assembly to help students deal with the crash. The principal and a local minister spoke. "[The crash] had a tremendous emotional impact," he says. "The girls were weeping... A lot of kids were bummed out."

Horton helped plan some of the early tribute weekends. He also collects Buddy Holly memorabilia, including promotional records or "pressings" sent to radio stations. He says rising musicians attend the tributes to "pay homage to the great ones" and learn about the history of American music.

"We're not celebrating the crash," adds Anderson, of the Surf Ballroom. "We're celebrating the music. They said the music died that day. We're proving that it didn't."

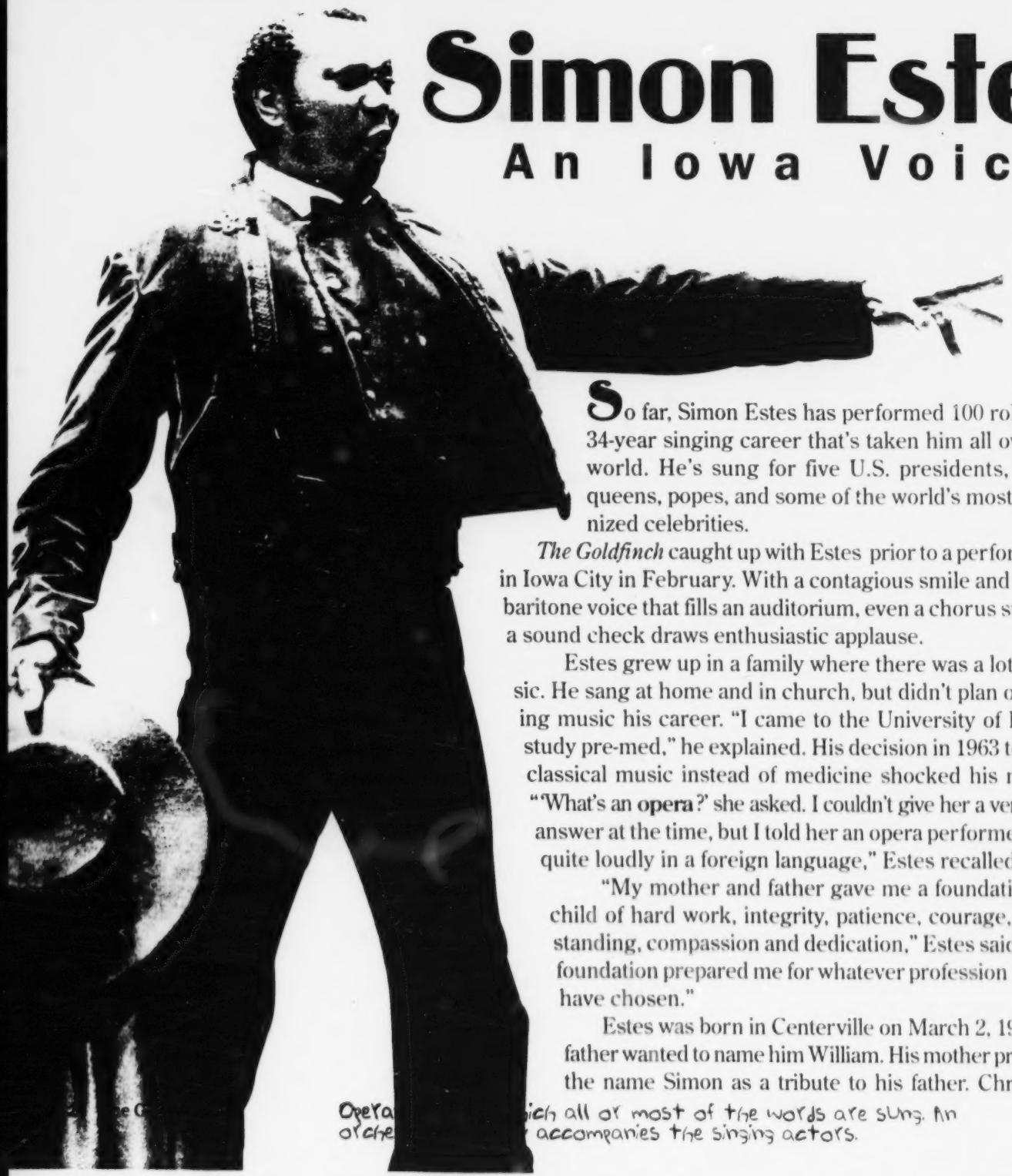
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Photo: Courtesy Elwin Musser/Mason City Globe Gazette

Shortly after arriving at work on February 3, 1959, Elwin Musser, a photographer for the Mason City *Globe-Gazette* newspaper, was assigned to take pictures of an airplane crash. When he got to the crash site, he didn't know that three musicians had been killed. He was waiting for the coroner to arrive when he heard the names of the victims on the radio. Musser hurried back to the office to develop his film. He remembers receiving phone calls from newspapers all over the country that day. Editors wanted to know if he had photos of the crash and how quickly they could receive copies. Musser's photos of the crash site included this image of investigators dismantling the plane to see how the controls were set at the time of the crash.

Simon Estes

An Iowa Voice



So far, Simon Estes has performed 100 roles in a 34-year singing career that's taken him all over the world. He's sung for five U.S. presidents, kings, queens, popes, and some of the world's most recognized celebrities.

The Goldfinch caught up with Estes prior to a performance in Iowa City in February. With a contagious smile and a bass-baritone voice that fills an auditorium, even a chorus sung for a sound check draws enthusiastic applause.

Estes grew up in a family where there was a lot of music. He sang at home and in church, but didn't plan on making music his career. "I came to the University of Iowa to study pre-med," he explained. His decision in 1963 to study classical music instead of medicine shocked his mother. "'What's an **opera**?' she asked. I couldn't give her a very good answer at the time, but I told her an opera performer sings quite loudly in a foreign language," Estes recalled.

"My mother and father gave me a foundation as a child of hard work, integrity, patience, courage, understanding, compassion and dedication," Estes said. "That foundation prepared me for whatever profession I would have chosen."

Estes was born in Centerville on March 2, 1938. His father wanted to name him William. His mother preferred the name Simon as a tribute to his father. Christened

Opera ich all or most of the words are sung. An
orche accompanies the singing actors.

Simon Estes with his father, who was born in 1891, the son of former slaves. "At the age of five, my father's father was sold for $500, shortly before President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863," Estes recalled. His father died in 1961. The elder Simon Estes never heard his son sing professionally.

Simon Estes performs in opera houses and recital halls around the world. "When my physical Simon Estes appearance is being changed to that of the character I'm about to portray, I am still aware of who I am and from where I have come. How did a skinny little boy from Centerville, Iowa, who thought he would never get farther east than Chicago make it *here*?"

What happens if you make a mistake during a performance?

There are mistakes made in every opera. All human beings can make mistakes, but we must not be governed and directed by fear. When you make a mistake, you don't let it get you down. You lift up your chest and sing as though you never made the mistake.

What advice do you have for Iowa kids who want to pursue a career in music?

If it's in vocal music, make sure you have the natural gift to sing. Find the right teacher with whom to work, and realize that it's a long, hard road to become an opera singer. But you can do it if you have the determination, the dedication, and the willpower. You can make it.

"The most important person who ever sat in any audience is my mother," Estes said

Ruth Estes and Simon

Simon Lamont Estes, his family called him Billy to avoid the confusion of having two Simons in the house.

In 1940, African Americans composed less than one percent of Iowa's population. When he was growing up in Centerville, Estes says, blacks performed menial jobs and earned low wages. Estes's father worked as a coal miner, washed cars at local dealerships, and carried luggage at the Continental Hotel. Though he contended with racism and bigotry, Estes says his father never allowed anything to hold him back.

"My mother and father taught my two sisters and me that we must never hate. We must always feel sorry for people who oppressed us." Estes said. "It wasn't pleasant to grow up with discrimination, but I learned to forgive people when they exercised discrimination against me."

Music is how Estes makes a living. He doesn't sing in the shower or for fun, saving his voice for strenuous opera roles and recitals. He also uses his voice to make a difference in the world, a few kids at a time. Because of his own experiences growing up in poverty, Estes established scholarship programs for talented students who can't afford college. He conducts master classes for gifted young singers and he's started a foundation that targets health and education needs of children around the world. The Simon Estes High School in Capetown, South Africa, honors the singer's work to improve conditions for black students in that country.

"Music enables me to help other people in the world, especially young people," Estes said. "Whenever I perform, I feel that I am a messenger and that God works through the gifts that he has given to me."

Photos: Courtesy Lyndaker Corporation

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Margherita Roberti

by Anna Vorm

Margherita Roberti changed her name—and Iowa history—when she devoted her life to opera.

Born Margaret Jean Roberts on June 27, 1927, Roberti lived on her family's cattle farm near Atlantic, Iowa, until she was 12 and her family moved to Muscatine. Her mother played the organ and piano, and her father loved to sing. She first experienced opera when her family took a trip to the Chicago Opera House when she was about 13 years old.

"We don't have much opera culture in Iowa," Roberti told *The Goldfinch*. "Des Moines has a few operas in the summers, but we don't have any opera companies. The closest is in Chicago."

Good opera training in Iowa was hard to find as well. Roberti studied with Professor Herald Stark at the University of Iowa. When she was 18, she moved to New York to continue her studies.

On November 18, 1949, Margaret married Tom Nobis, and they moved to Davenport. Three years later, their daughter Jennifer was born. Roberti balanced her family and her career as she toured Europe, South America, and the United States. Her family often made trips to see her perform, and sometimes Jennifer traveled with her.

Roberti's dream was to sing at the greatest opera house in the world—La Scala in Italy. But it wasn't going to be easy.

"You have to be very disciplined if you want to succeed," said Roberti. "People think it's all fun. They see you when you're all dressed up on stage. They don't see the hours of practice."

In January of 1956, Roberti arrived in Italy. Another American singer, Carmen Scalvini, befriended Roberti. Scalvini gave her a place to stay and convinced her to change her name to an Italian one. From then on, Margaret Jean Roberts was known as Margherita Roberti.

Roberti opened the season at La Scala more often than any other soprano and is the only American opera singer ever knighted by the Italian government. After 13 years in Italy, Roberti retired. She and her husband live in Davenport but she still visits Italy several times a year. "Iowa will always be my home," she said. "I was born here. When I'm on Italian soil I feel very Italian, and when I'm on Iowa soil, I'm Iowan."

Roberti's daughter Jennifer lives in Colorado with her husband and 18-year-old son Alexander. Exposing her grandson to opera was very important to Roberti, who began taking him to operas when he was 10.

"In America people listen to country, rock and pop, but in Europe [everyone] knows all about opera and symphonic music," Roberti said. "It's two different cultures. Country, rock, jazz. . . they all have their place, but opera is important too."

Photo Courtesy Frederick Crane

Notable Iowans!

Glenn Miller was born in Clarinda, Iowa, in 1904. He played trombone and composed and arranged music. From 1938 until his death in 1944, Miller led the band that established the big-band sound of the time. He enlisted in the army in 1942, ten months after the United States entered World War II. In the service, Miller joined and directed the 418th Army Air Forces Band. Miller died when his plane disappeared over the English Channel on a foggy December day in 1944.

Glenn Miller directed an army band during World War II.

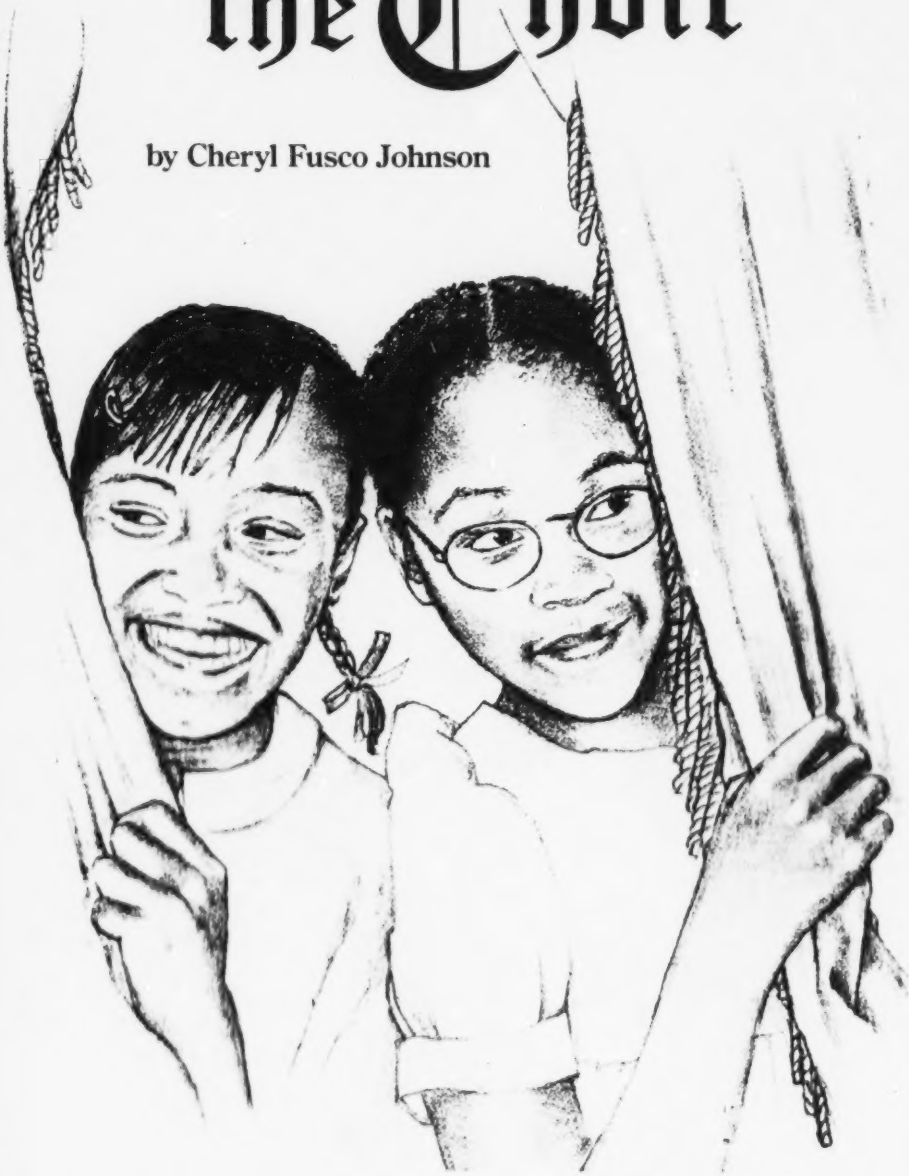
Harriet Hilliard was born in Des Moines in 1914 and began her career in New York as a dancer. She was hired as a singer with Ozzie Nelson's band in 1932 and married the boss in 1935. They toured for years and made more than 100 albums. After World War II, the rise in popularity of solo singers "brought about radical changes in the music business," Hilliard once said. "Ozzie and I were forced to give up the orchestra, but soon we were active in radio as a team."

Their real fame came in movie musicals and with *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, first broadcast in 1944 as a radio production with their two sons. The show switched to television in 1968.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Singing in the Choir

by Cheryl Fusco Johnson



From behind the stage curtain, Darlene Jones and her cousin Karen peeked at the crowd.

"Look," Darlene whispered. "Every seat is taken."

"Scared?" Karen whispered.

"A little," Darlene answered. "Are you?"

As Karen nodded, the pink ribbons on her short black braids bobbed up and down.

"I'm glad we got to wear dresses tonight instead of choir robes," Darlene whispered. Darlene thought her cousin's pink dress looked beautiful against her cinnamon-colored skin. Darlene liked her dress, too. The yellow cotton glowed against Darlene's skin, which was darker than Karen's. "Exactly the shade of coffee beans," Daddy always said. "You're perky as a cup of coffee, too."

"Girls! Come away from there!" Darlene's mama whisked the cousins to their places, side by side, in the front row of the 25-member choir. She signaled, and a stagehand raised the curtain.

"Welcome!" Mrs. Jones told the crowd.

People clapped and whistled. One man called out, "Evenin', Mrs. Jones!"

Art by Mary Moye Rowley

Darlene looked around. The crowd seemed ten times as large as the one the choir sang to every week at church. A few strangers, white people from outside the neighborhood, sat in the back row. Nervously, Darlene clasped Karen's hand.

Mrs. Jones said, "Thank you for coming to our fund raiser tonight. The money you paid for your ticket will buy materials for a new church roof. As most of you know, hail damaged the old roof last year during the worst storm of 1957."

Darlene spotted many familiar faces. Her dad and little brothers waved from the front row. Karen's big brother, William, visiting from Chicago, sat there, too. The girls' fifth grade teacher, the mailman, the local grocer, Darlene's doctor and dentist—nearly everyone Darlene knew was there.

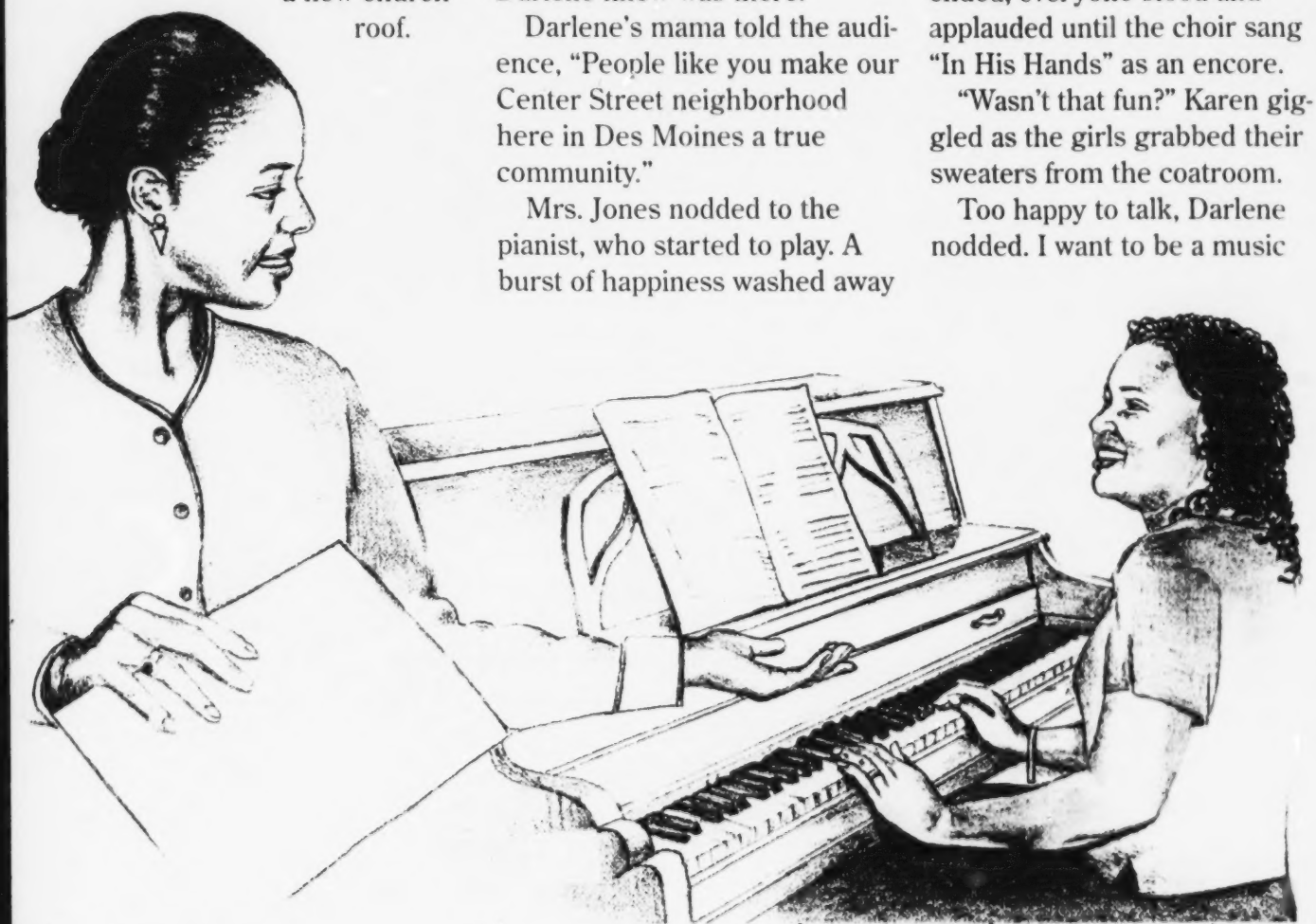
Darlene's mama told the audience, "People like you make our Center Street neighborhood here in Des Moines a true community."

Mrs. Jones nodded to the pianist, who started to play. A burst of happiness washed away Darlene's stage fright as the choir's voices rolled towards the crowd. Old, young, and middle-aged, the choir members melded into a powerful, joyful force when they started to sing.

They belted out "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot", "Walk Together Children", "I Got Shoes", and many other spirituals. The audience clapped, swayed, and sang along. When the program ended, everyone stood and applauded until the choir sang "In His Hands" as an encore.

"Wasn't that fun?" Karen giggled as the girls grabbed their sweaters from the coatroom.

Too happy to talk, Darlene nodded. I want to be a music



teacher, she decided. I'll study at the University of Iowa. Someday I'll share this joy with my students.

"Let's go," Karen called.

In the lobby, clusters of people congratulated the singers. William waved to the girls.

Darlene knew Karen's brother played tenor sax in a rhythm and blues band in Chicago. *Did he like our music?* she wondered.

William cried, "Great singing, Little Sister!" He scooped Karen up and swung her around.

"Darlene, come here." Mrs. Jones beckoned from across the room. Two white men stood beside her.

"Mr. Northup, Reverend Swanson, this is Darlene."

"We heard some fine singing tonight," Rev. Swanson said. He had blonde hair, blue eyes, and wore a minister's collar.

"Mighty fine," Mr. Northup added.

"Thanks," Darlene smiled.

Her mama said, "Mr. Northup directs the choir at Rev. Swanson's church. They've invited us to sing there next Sunday morning."

Darlene's heart thudded. She liked singing in her church and at school, and she'd enjoyed the fund raiser. *But what will it be like to sing outside the neighborhood, to so many strangers?* she wondered.

During the week, Mrs. Jones held extra rehearsals. At the church library, she and Darlene read books on musical history.

"Folks in this audience might not be familiar with spirituals," Mama said.

Darlene helped Mama write a short script about the songs the choir would sing.

Saturday, Mama woke up with a bad cold.

"Cancel tonight's rehearsal," Daddy advised.

Mama did. Darlene helped Daddy cook lunch and dinner. Everyone went to bed early, but at breakfast on Sunday, Mama couldn't talk.

"Laryngitis," Mama croaked.

"Can you still conduct?" Daddy asked.

Mama nodded and mouthed, "What about the announcements?"

"I'll make them," Darlene offered.

"That a girl," Daddy said.

The choir rode a borrowed school bus to Rev. Swanson's church. On the way, Darlene practiced her lines. Karen, sitting beside her, checked the script. "Perfect," Karen said.

Sure, Darlene thought, I can say it here. But in front of dozens of strangers?

All too soon, the bus stopped. In a blur, Darlene followed Mama into the large brick church, where the choir assembled near the altar. White people filled the pews. Darlene didn't know anyone there.

Mr. Northup introduced the choir. People in the congregation smiled, but no one clapped.

Darlene stepped forward. "We're happy to share spirituals with you this morning. Spirituals have been sung for many years. Harriet Tubman, a conductor on the Underground Railroad, sang "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "Wade in the Water" to signal slaves as she led them to freedom. Spirituals are a distinctive contribution to world music. We think their appeal is universal. We hope you will, too."

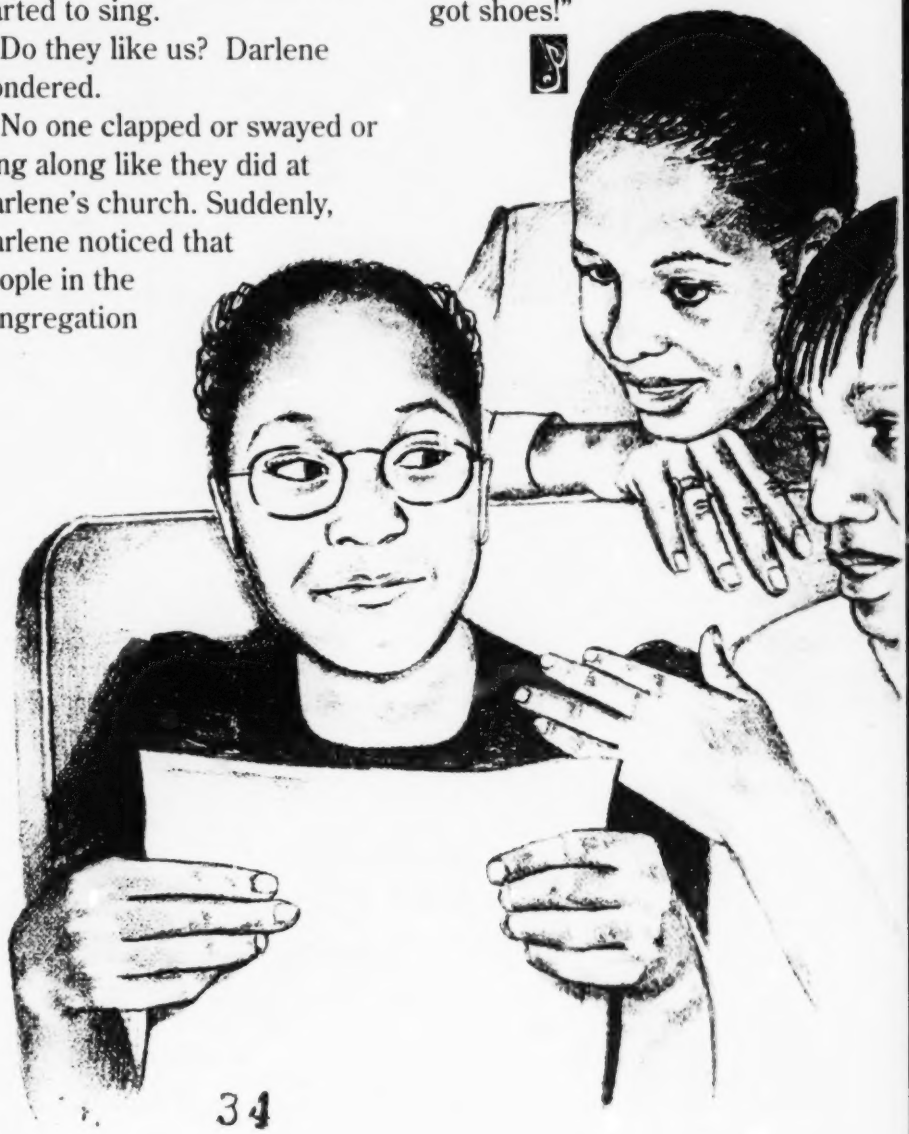
Darlene took her place. Mama signaled, and the choir started to sing.

Do they like us? Darlene wondered.

No one clapped or swayed or sang along like they did at Darlene's church. Suddenly, Darlene noticed that people in the congregation were smiling, nodding, and tapping their feet.

They do like us!

Darlene grinned as the choir sang, "All God's children got shoes!"



Iowa Performers
The Next Generation

At age 16, Donnabelle Mullenger left Denison on a train bound for Los Angeles to follow her dream of becoming an actress. Known as Donna Reed, she appeared in 40 feature films and musicals, won an Oscar, and starred in her own television series, The Donna Reed Show, *from 1958 to 1966. Reed worked behind the scenes of her TV show as the uncredited producer, contributing writer, and director—roles rarely handled by women at that time.*

Since 1985, a festival held each year in Reed's hometown trains and encourages the next generation of performers—many of whom are too young to remember her work. The Goldfinch *asked Anne Good of Fort Dodge to describe her experiences at the Donna Reed Festival in Denison.*

by Anne Good

Anne Good as "Jasmine"

I was born a performer. Ever since I was little I've loved to sing and dance. In high school, I was involved in drama, choir, and school musicals. One spring, someone told me about the Donna Reed Festival in Denison, Iowa. I was really excited about it because it offered all the performance opportunities I was interested in. The first summer I attended the Donna Reed Festival, I participated in a two-day commercial acting workshop led by Randy Kirby, a well-known commercial actor. Mr. Kirby gave us fun and helpful advice about breaking into acting, specifically into commercial acting.

> (Donna) ... challenged you to reach for more—to dream your dream—to try your hardest.
>
> *Shelley Fabares, actress who played the teenage daughter on the* Donna Reed Show.

I had so much fun the first year that I attended the week-long musical workshop two years later. I stayed with a wonderful host family that week and met many new people. Everyone auditioned for the musical by singing a prepared Broadway tune on the first day. At the end of the day, parts were assigned, and we began practicing *South Pacific*. The "leads" of the show were the ones who had a solo or solo/duet, because the musical was actually a medley of songs without dialog. During the week, we practiced singing and learned choreography. I was extremely excited because I had a solo/duet. At the end of the week, we performed the musical. I went back to the festival the next year where I was "Jasmine" in a Disney medley.

The Donna Reed Festival is a mixture of hard work, performance, new people, celebrities, and FUN! I highly recommend it!

Name That Iowa Musician

1. He sings Mesquakie love songs. _ _ _ _ ◯ ◯ ◯
2. Flute player from Garden Grove. _ _ ◯ _ _ ◯
3. He spent a summer in Spillville. _ ◯ _ ◯ _ _
4. Jazz genius. _ _ ◯ _ _ _ _ ◯ _ _ ◯
5. She wrote 4-H songs, among other things. _ _ ◯ _ _ _ _ _
6. Music teacher and mass choir director. _ _ _ _ _ ◯ _ _ _
7. Mason City musician. _ ◯ _ _ ◯ _ ◯
8. Her dream: perform at La Scala in Italy. _ ◯ _ ◯ _ _ _
9. He uses his voice to help kids around the world. _ ◯ _ _ _

Unscramble the circled letters to find the hidden message.

_ _ _ _ _ _

History Mystery

I was born in Centerville, Iowa, on March 2, 1938. My nickname was Billy–until third grade when I wanted to go by my more grown-up-sounding given name.

At first, our family of six lived in a four-room house. My three sisters claimed most of the space because I was a scrawny little boy who didn't take up much room. In fact, my sisters had strict orders from our mother to walk me home from school on windy days so I wouldn't blow away! My brother was born years later, when I was in high school.

Sometimes kids at school called me names because of my skin color. I couldn't eat in cafes in town or get my hair cut at the barbershop like my white friends could. My parents told me to love–and pray for–people who called me names or treated us unfairly. As a kid, that was hard to do. But I've always tried to live by my parents' wisdom and example.

I planned to become a doctor, but pursued music as a career instead. As a professional singer, I've performed for U.S. and foreign presidents, kings and queens, and Nobel Prize winners. The Centerville High School auditorium is named after me, as is a high school in South Africa.

Who am I? (Turn to page 26 to find out!)

THE Goldfinch
US ISSN 0278-0208
State Historical Society of Iowa
402 Iowa Avenue
Iowa City, Iowa 52240-1806

Second-class postage paid
at Iowa City, Iowa

GO 47405DEVCENSINDNAN A
Social Studies Dev Center
2805 E. 10th St Suite 120
Indiana UniversityITE 120
BLOOMINGTON IN 47405

37

BEST COPY AVAILABLE